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station 16 and the special application service center 14 in order to cause the service center 14 to send the special content message to the terminating mobile station so that it can be processed according to the corresponding special application and provided to the user via the terminating mobile station 16. This interchange is symbolized by a bidirectional signal line 20.

Meanwhile, the special application service center 14 has stored the special content message received on the line 12 from the originating mobile station 10 in a memory device resident in the service center 14. If the terminating mobile station 16 does not request the special content message, or if it sends a message back indicating it is not capable, the service center 14 then retrieves the special content message from memory and posts the special content message on a web page having a domain name or URL identified in the short message already sent to the terminating mobile station. In this way, if the terminating mobile station 16 is not capable of processing the special content message, the user can nevertheless read the short message and go to the nearest personal computer or workstation connected to the internet and view the special content message at the URL specified in the short message provided on the line 18, e.g., using the USERID and/or PASSWORD also provided with the short message. In this way, the present invention solves the problem of having a highly capable mobile station trying to send messages to mobile stations that are not so capable but which nevertheless can be utilized by the user in conjunction with a personal computer or workstation to be able to fully appreciate the special application message.

The terminating mobile station 16 of FIG. 1 is shown in FIG. 2 with a display showing a special content (picture) message on a display. The picture message is provided using a graphic message service for providing short text greetings displayed below a black and white picture of, for example, 72x28 pixels (wxh). Such a picture message can be provided by the special (picture) application service center 14 shown in FIG. 2 connected to a mobile switching center 265 of a mobile communications system. FIG. 2 also shows a short message service center 22 connected to the mobile switching center 26 and to the SASC 14. These connections may be direct, as shown, or indirect, i.e., through other network entities. As known in the art, such an MSC 26 is connected to multiple base station subsystems 28, each of which includes multiple base transceiver stations (BTS) connected to a base station controller (BSC).

The MSC 26 may be connected to the internet 30 by means of a gateway 32. As explained above, the user of the terminating mobile station 16 of FIG. 1 can access a nearby PC 34 when his mobile station 16 is not capable of fully processing the special content message from the originating mobile station 10. By accessing the web page posted by the special application service center 14, the user can fully appreciate the message, even though his mobile station 16 is not as fully capable as the mobile station 10 of the originating user.

FIG. 3 shows by a plurality interconnected functional blocks the various functions carried out by the special application service center 14. As will be appreciated, these functions can be carried out on a general purpose digital computer using software in conjunction with various hardware devices. One such hardware device is means 36 for receiving the special content message (or a request that a special content message be sent) on the line 12 from the originating mobile station 10 of FIG. 1. This signal would be provided to the special application service center 14 through a mobile communication system infrastructure such as that

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shown in FIG. 2 or similar. In response to receiving the special content message or request therefor, a short message is composed similar to that described previously and provided on a line 38 to means 40 for providing the short message on the line 18 to the terminating mobile station 16 of FIG. 1. FIG. 4 shows a series of steps carried out in the special application service center 14 of FIG. 3, including steps 36a, 40a, which correspond to the functions carried out in the blocks 36, 40 of FIG. 3. If the terminating mobile station 16 is capable of receiving the special content message, it will send a request therefor on a line 20a back to the special application service center 14, where it is received by a means 42 for receiving the request for the special content message. It is then determined in the special application service center 14, for instance within the means 42, whether a request from the terminating mobile station has been received. If so, a retrieval request signal is provided on a line 44 to a memory means 46 within which the special content message has previously been stored by the means 36 for receiving same over a signal line 48. It is also possible that the special content message is temporarily stored in the means 36 until it receives a command signal on a line 50 from the means 42 and as shown by a step 42a in FIG. 4 after receiving the request from the terminating mobile station 16 on the line 20a. The means 36 for receiving could only then store the special content message in the memory means 46 over the line 48.

It is also possible, as suggested above, that the originating mobile terminal 16 has merely sent a request that a special content message be sent. In other words, although the originating mobile station 10 may be capable of composing special content messages by itself or may have a set of default special content messages stored within, it is also possible that the special application service center will have a large number of special content messages stored within that can be made available on an uplink 12a to the originating mobile station for further composition or that may be combined with a textual message from the originating mobile station 10 provided on the line 12 and sent on the line 18 to the terminating mobile station. In that case, the means 46 for storing the special content message would also be capable of storing a large number of special content messages that are available for use by originating mobile stations.

It should therefore be understood that the "providing" and "receiving" of a special content message from an originating mobile station 10 to the special application service center may (but need not) also encompass a request for a special content message from the originating mobile station which, after receiving same, will be fulfilled by the special application service center.

If the step 42a determines that a request has been received, the signal on the line 44 causes the contents of the memory means 46 to be read and provided on a line 52 to a means 54 for sending the special content message on a line 20b to the terminating mobile station 16, as also illustrated by a step 54a of FIG. 4. Once the special content message has been sent, the means 54 can provide a signal on a line 56 to a means 58 for acknowledging that the special content message has been sent. This acknowledgement is not necessary, but would cause the line 12 of FIG. 1 to be bidirectional. This step is shown as a step 58a in FIG. 4.

If it were determined in the step 42a that the terminating mobile station has not requested that the special content message be provided, a step 60 is executed instead, as shown in FIG. 4. In that step a message can be sent to the originating mobile station 10 on the line 12a that only the